AVATAR

The Last Airbender

Show #218

BOOK TWO: EARTH
CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: "The Earth King"

Written by:

John O'Bryan

As Broadcast Draft
October 26, 2006

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. ISLAND IN LAKE LAOGAI - DAY

The group is on a small, secluded island in the middle of the ocean-sized lake. Aang and Momo are lying face down on Appa, hugging his backside.

AANG
I missed you more than you'll ever know, buddy.

MOMO
(CHITTERS SOFTLY)

APPA
(BELLOWS WARMLY)

The rest of the group gives them space and talks amongst themselves.

SOKKA
Look, we escaped from the Dai Li, we got Appa back -- I'm telling you, we should go see the Earth King now and tell him our plan. We're on a roll.

KATARA
One good hour after weeks of trouble isn't much of a roll.

SOKKA
We can build on it. If we want to invade the Fire Nation when the eclipse happens, we need the Earth King's support.

TOPH
What makes you think we'll get it? I don't know if you've noticed, but things don't usually go that smoothly for our little gang.

SOKKA
I know, but I've got a good feeling about this. This time will be different.

Aang, Momo, and Appa frolic in the background.

KATARA
Sokka, Long Feng is in control of the city -- his conspiracy with the Dai Li is too powerful. I think we should just keep flying and leave this horrible place behind us.

TOPH
I'm with Sweetness. I've seen enough of Ba Sing Se, and I can't even see!

Aang bounces off of Appa into their midst.

AANG
But now that we have Appa back, there's nothing stopping us from telling the Earth King the truth -- about the conspiracy and the war.

SOKKA
See? Aang's with me!

He puts his arm around Aang and smiles broadly.

SOKKA (cont'd)
It's the whole reason we came here in the first place. We have to try.

It looks like their logic is getting through to Katara.

KATARA
Well, I guess if the Earth King knew the truth... things could change.

Toph shakes her head. She's not buying it.

TOPH
I don't trust the new positive Sokka.
(pointing at him)
Long Feng brainwashed you, didn't he?!

Suddenly, Aang spots something on the horizon -- it's a ship.

SOKKA
That's probably the Dai Li searching for us. So?

KATARA
Let's fly!

EXT. SKY ABOVE BA SING SE - MINUTES LATER

The kids and Appa soar at top speed across the city. They lie flat, hugging Appa's fur tightly.

TOPH
Can we please buy a new saddle? Riding bareback is terrifying!

As they cross the inner wall into the upper ring of the city, they see the Earth King's enormous palace in the distance. It's huge -- actually numerous palaces linked together. (Designed to somewhat resemble the Forbidden City in China.)

SOKKA
There it is. That whole thing is the palace. The Earth King's chambers should be in the center.

KATARA
We have to be careful. Long Feng's probably warned the king that we're coming.

SOKKA
Why would you assume that? If you ask me, I think we're just going to sail right on in-- (SCREAMS)

He's interrupted as the gang is almost smashed by a large FLYING ROCK. Appa swerves, narrowly avoiding it.

TOPH
What was that?!

They look down at the palace, where several ROYAL EARTHBENDER GUARDS are shooting surface-to-air rocks at them.

SOKKA
Surface-to-Air Rocks! More incoming!

Another large rock almost knocks them out of the sky. Aang deflects it at the last second with his Earthbending.

He looks below to see the ground swarming with guards. With no reins, Aang tugs on Appa's mane, directing him to the clearing below.

They wrap their wrists in Appa fur, and the bison nosedives past a couple more earthy projectiles.

EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - MOMENTS LATER

As soon as Appa hits the ground, the gang is assaulted by palace guards. In an instant, the kids jump down and begin cutting a path through the king's men.

Aang executes a twirling move that blows several of them out of the way. Katara whips a few more, knocking them over.

KATARA
Sorry...

She knocks another over.

KATARA (cont'd)
Sorry, we just need to get through to see the Earth King--

Sokka swings his machete wildly, causing a few of the guards to back away. They then back into Appa, who GROWLS at them, causing them to run off SCREAMING. Toph executes an underhanded Earthbending move similar to a bowling ball -- as it rolls towards a line of guards...

SOKKA
Seriously, we're actually on your guys' side--

WHAM!

SOKKA (cont'd)
(wincing)
Sorry.

The Earthbending attack knocks the guards away, clearing the entrance.

SOKKA (cont'd)
In there!

INT. PALACE WING - CONTINUOUS

Before our heroes have the chance to orient themselves inside the palace, they are attacked by another dozen guards. Toph pins several to the ceiling with a large, swift, stone column that shoots up from the floor.

Aang blows several more guards out of a window. Katara traps a few of them in ice. Sokka attempts to lead the kids to the main palace.

SOKKA
Toph, which way to the Earth King?!

TOPH
How should I know? I'm still voting we leave Ba Sing Se.

As Aang, Katara, and Toph continue to ward off the guards, Sokka begins checking room after room in the palace wing. He opens a door...

NOBLEMAN (O.S.)
(startled)
Burglar!

SOKKA
Sorry! Wrong door.

INT. LARGE ROTUNDA - CONTINUOUS

The kids race into the adjoining room, which turns out to be a large rotunda. Several more guards descend from a catwalk/terrace above.

She whips some water around her head, forming a discus of ice, and fires it into a couple of the guards. The ice shatters, taking the guards down.

Toph feels some more of them coming, and calmly turns the marble floor beneath them to quicksand. The guards sink up to their thighs, unable to move.

Aang bounces a few more guys away with an air bubble. Sokka whacks through some support ropes, causing a giant tapestry to fall on a few guards.

INT. UNCLE AND ZUKO'S APARTMENT - THAT MOMENT

Zuko and Uncle enter their apartment, having just escaped from a watery grave at Lake Laogai.

UNCLE
You did the right thing, letting the Avatar's bison go free.

ZUKO
I don't feel right...

Uncle doesn't notice that Zuko is a pale, sweaty mess.

ZUKO'S POV: the room is spinning dizzily.

THUD. Uncle turns to see that his nephew has collapsed onto the ground.

UNCLE
Zuko!

Iroh runs to him and picks him up.

INT. PALACE - DECORATIVE HALLWAY - LATER

The kids come to a large, heavily secured door at the end of the hallway.

SOKKA
Now that's an impressive door.
It's gotta go somewhere.

He runs to the door and begins hacking away at the locks with his boomerang. Suddenly, Sokka and the door both smack to the ground -- we see Appa has sent an Airbending blast with his tail.

SOKKA (cont'd)
A little warning, next time?

APPA
(BELLOWS)

INT. EARTH KING'S THRONE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Aang and company break down the door, finally forcing their way into the center of the palace: the King's throne room. (NOTE: Appa is not with them. He's waiting in the other room.)

Inside, they see the EARTH KING sitting at his throne. Next to him there is a pai sho table, where his PET BEAR is curiously playing with the pieces. Nearby are LONG FENG, a few DAI LI AGENTS, and a few ROYAL GUARDS. (If the room is too crowded, maybe the royal guards don't need to be here?) They all instantly jump into fighting stances, the Dai Li cocking their stone Earthbender fists at the kids, who quickly assume fighting stances of their own. It's a tense stand-off -- Long Feng and Aang share an intense look.

AANG
(to Earth King)
We need to talk to you!

LONG FENG
They're here to overthrow you.

SOKKA
No, we're on you're side -- we're here to help!

KATARA
You have to trust us!

EARTH KING
You invade my palace, lay waste to all my guards, break down my fancy door -- and you expect me to trust you?!

TOPH
(to the others)
He has a good point.

EARTH KING
If you're on my side... then drop your weapons and stand down.

The kids look at each other, then agree to drop their weapons. Aang drops his staff, Katara drops her stream of water, Toph drops her rock, Sokka drops his machete, and they all assume non-threatening stances.

AANG
(big goofy smile)
See... we're friends, Your Earthiness. Heh...

The Earth King answers Aang with only a STERN GAZE. Long Feng NODS a command to the Dai Li agents, who punch their stone fists at the unarmed kids. The rocks form like manacles on the kids' hands.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. KING'S THRONE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

LONG FENG
Detain the assailants.

SOKKA
But we dropped our weapons. We're your allies.

LONG FENG
Make sure the Avatar and his friends never see daylight again.

EARTH KING
(still mistrustful)
The Avatar? You're the Avatar?

We see he's talking to Sokka.

SOKKA
Uh, no. Him.

Sokka points to Aang -- Aang Earthbends one of his hands free for a moment to signal...

AANG
Over here.

He then Earthbends his hand back into the manacle.

LONG FENG
What does it matter, your highness? They're enemies of the state.

EARTH KING
(still wary)
Perhaps you're right...

The King's bear ambles over to Aang, and licks him.

AANG
(GIGGLES)

EARTH KING
Though Bosco seems to like him. I'll hear what he has to say.

AANG
Well, sir...

He looks over at Long Feng uneasily.

AANG (cont'd)
There's a war going on right now -- for the past one hundred years, in fact! The Dai Li's kept it secret from you. It's a conspiracy to control the city and to control you!

EARTH KING
A secret war?! That's crazy!

LONG FENG
Completely.

AANG
Long Feng didn't want us to tell you, so he stole our sky bison to blackmail us.
(accusing)
And blackmail is the least of his crimes -- he brainwashed our friend.

Long Feng handles the accusations calmly and confidently.

LONG FENG
All lies. I've never even seen a sky bison, Your Majesty. Frankly, I thought they were extinct.

EARTH KING
This is difficult to believe. Even from an Avatar.

Long Feng speaks privately into the Earth King's ear.

LONG FENG
(sotto to the King)
These hooligans are part of an anarchist cell that my agents have been tracking for weeks. If you listen to them, you're playing right into your own destruction.

The Earth King thinks for a long beat, then...

EARTH KING
(to kids)
I have to trust my advisor.

Long Feng motions to the Dai Li, who begin muscling the kids out of the room. Then, just before they're about to leave...

SOKKA
Wait! I can prove he's lying. Long Feng says he's never seen a sky bison? Ask him to lift his robe.

LONG FENG
(offended)
What?! I am not disrobing!

Sokka looks to the King, who is bewildered by his request. Sokka then turns to Aang and nods. Aang nods back, then shoots a strong wind current up Long Feng's robe, lifting it over his head in hilarious fashion. On Long Feng's leg are several bison-sized teeth marks.

AANG
Right there! Appa bit him!

SOKKA
Never met a sky bison, huh?

LONG FENG
That happens to be a large birth mark. Thanks for showing everyone!

EARTH KING
Well I suppose there's no way to prove where those marks came from...

SOKKA
Of course there is!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. KING'S THRONE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Appa is now in the room. Everyone looks at him for a beat -- then he grins, displaying his GIANT TEETH.

EARTH KING
Yep, that pretty much proves it...

TOPH/AANG/SOKKA/KATARA/MOMO
(REJOICING SOUNDS)

EARTH KING
But it doesn't prove this crazy conspiracy theory.

TOPH/AANG/SOKKA/KATARA/MOMO
(DISAPPOINTED SOUNDS)

EARTH KING
Though... I suppose this matter's worth looking into.

TOPH/AANG/SOKKA/KATARA/MOMO
(SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN)

Long Feng looks worried.

INT. UNCLE AND ZUKO'S APARTMENT - DAY

Zuko is now unclothed, sweating profusely under thick blankets. Uncle feels his forehead.

UNCLE
You're burning up. You have an intense fever...

Uncle dips a sponge into a tub of water, and begins to bathe his nephew's arm.

UNCLE (cont'd)
This will help cool you down.

ZUKO
(parched)
So thirsty...

He starts to get up, but Uncle restrains him and puts him back down to sleep.

UNCLE
Here's some clean water to drink. Stay under the blankets and sweat this out.

Uncle retrieves a pail of water for Zuko. He scoops some out with a ladle and feeds it to his nephew. Zuko impatiently takes the pail and begins drinking directly from it. Uncle returns to washing him.

INT. BA SING SE MONORAIL - MINUTES LATER

The kids and the Earth King (accompanied by a few royal guards) are now all riding on the train. Several more passengers see the king and WHISPER excitedly.

EARTH KING
So this is what a train is like. I didn't realize it would be this... public.

KATARA
So you've never been outside the upper ring before?

EARTH KING
I've never been outside the palace!

He looks out the window to see Aang flying on Appa, right beside them.

EARTH KING (cont'd)
Now that's the way to travel! So... may I ask where we're going?

SOKKA
Underneath Lake Laogai, your Kingliness.

Sokka looks out the window again to see the train is approaching the lake.

SOKKA (cont'd)
...To the Dai Li's secret headquarters. You're about to see where all the brainwashing and conspiring took place.

EXT. LAKE LAOGAI - MINUTES LATER

The kids have led the King to the spot where they found the tunnel leading under the lake. Toph tries to find the opening.

TOPH
It's gone...

SOKKA
Oh, don't tell me --
(catching himself)
That's okay, still got my positive attitude.

Sokka puts on a big, fake smile and a thumbs up.

KATARA
The Dai Li must have known we were coming and destroyed the evidence.

The Earth King now looks mistrustful.

EARTH KING
Hmm... that seems awfully convenient.

A beat, as the kids squirm.

SOKKA
Hey, if anything, this proves the conspiracy exists even more!

EARTH KING
Long Feng was right -- this was a waste of time. If you'll excuse me, I'm going back to the palace.

The King starts to walk back toward the monorail.

KATARA
The wall! They'll never be able to cover that up in time!

AANG
Oh, yeah!
(to Earth King)
If you come with us to the outer wall, we can prove to you that the secret war is real.

EARTH KING
No Earth King has ever been to the outer wall. I don't have anymore time for this nonsense.

Sokka gets an idea.

SOKKA
If you come with us...
(tempting)
This time you can ride on Appa.

APPA
(TEMPTING BELLOWS)

The Earth King gets an intrigued look on his face.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. SKY ABOVE AGRARIAN ZONE - LATER

EARTH KING
(SCREAMS)

The Earth King looks down, terrified by the flight.

TOPH
First time flying?

He stops cringing and takes a moment to appreciate the magnificent view of his city in the distance.

EARTH KING
It's both thrilling and terrifying.

TOPH
Yeah, I hate it too.

EARTH KING
(still gazing at city)
I have to be honest with you -- part of me really hopes that what you're telling me about this war... isn't true.

He hangs his head in thought.

AANG
I wish it wasn't.

INT. UNCLE AND ZUKO'S APARTMENT - THAT MOMENT

Zuko is now in the full throes of a fever dream. He writhes and sweats violently...

ZUKO
(MUTTERS GIBBERISH)

Iroh, who is still by his nephew's side, checks his head for fever again. As we pull in Zuko's sweaty brow, we...

DREAM DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FIRE NATION THRONE ROOM - NIGHT

Zuko is where he rightfully belongs -- on his throne in the Fire Nation. His scar is gone. He looks to each side and sees a pet dragon (one BLUE, one RED) sitting on either side of him. The Blue Dragon opens its mouth and speaks to Zuko.

BLUE DRAGON
It's getting late. Are you planning to retire soon, my Lord?

ZUKO
I'm not tired.

He stretches, and can't resist the urge to YAWN.

BLUE DRAGON
Relax, Fire Lord Zuko. Just let go. Give in to it. Shut your eyes for a while...

As the Blue Dragon speaks, she lulls Zuko into feeling sleepier and sleepier. Just when it seems he may nod off...

RED DRAGON
No, Fire Lord Zuko! Do not listen to the Blue Dragon. You should get out of here. Right now.

Zuko isn't sure who to believe.

RED DRAGON (cont'd)
Go! Before it's too late!

Zuko tries to stand up, but his body is falling asleep. (Perhaps we can show this with some sort of jiggly/jelly-like effect on his legs.) He struggles, but he finds himself unable to move.

BLUE DRAGON
(soothing him)
Sleep now, Fire Lord Zuko...

The floor around Zuko's throne begins to crumble away.

BLUE DRAGON (cont'd)
Sleep... just like Mother!

Suddenly, the Blue Dragon opens its mouth very wide, revealing Zuko's mother trapped deep in its stomach. She looks up the dragon's gullet at Zuko.

ZUKO'S MOTHER
Zuko! Help me!

Zuko sinks into his own throne as if being swallowed up by quicksand.

ZUKO
(TERRIFIED SCREAM)

EXT. SKY APPROACHING WALL - LATER

Suddenly, Aang points below.

AANG
It's still there!

They look below, where there is indeed a gigantic drill stuck in the wall.

EARTH KING
(stunned)
What is that?

SOKKA
It's a drill. A giant drill, made by the Fire Nation to break through your walls.

The Earth King covers his mouth in horror.

EXT. OUTER WALL - MOMENTS LATER

Appa lands on the top of the wall. The kids and the Earth King look down at the drill in the wall.

EARTH KING
(in awe)
I can't believe I never knew.

LONG FENG (O.S.)
I can explain this, Your Majesty.

Everyone turns to see Long Feng. He's mysteriously beaten them to the wall.

LONG FENG (cont'd)
(weak attempt)
This is nothing more than a... construction project.

KATARA
Really? Then perhaps you could explain why there's a Fire Nation insignia on your construction project.

She points to the Fire Nation emblem, clear as day on the back of the drill. Long Feng realizes he's busted.

LONG FENG
(trying to cover)
Well, it's imported, of course. You know you can't trust domestic machinery.

He makes a weak, apologetic shrug and smile. He looks around and sees no one is buying his story.

LONG FENG (cont'd)
Surely you don't believe these children instead of your most loyal attendant.

The Earth King looks to Long Feng, who is stewing with anger.

EARTH KING
Dai Li, arrest Long Feng. I want him to stand trial for crimes against the Earth Kingdom.

He looks at the Dai Li agents. Everyone watches with bated breath, waiting to see if the Dai Li will obey. Even the two Dai Li agents seem to be calculating their decision... but then they seize Long Feng.

LONG FENG
You can't arrest ME! You all need me more than you know!

As Long Feng is dragged away, Sokka shouts after him.

SOKKA
Looks like Long Feng is long gone! (CHUCKLES TO HIMSELF) Yeah, I've been waiting to use that one.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. KING'S THRONE ROOM - NIGHT

The King is in a somber mood, talking to the kids.

EARTH KING
I want to thank you, young heros, for opening my eyes. All this time, what I thought was a great metropolis was merely a city of fools. And that makes me... the King Fool.

The Earth King's pet bear lowers his head to the ground, sadly.

PET BEAR
(SAD WHINE)

He shoots a glance at Toph. She shrugs.

EARTH KING
We're at war...
(in disbelief)
With the Fire Nation.

Momo grabs the Earth King's hand, trying to comfort him.

SOKKA
That's why we came to Ba Sing Se, Your Highness -- because we think you can help us end the war.

AANG
We don't have much time. There's a comet coming this summer. Its energy will give the Firebenders unbelievable strength. They'll be unstoppable.

The Earth King buries his head in his hands.

PET BEAR
(SAD MOAN)

SOKKA
But there is hope. Before the comet comes, we have a window of opportunity. A solar eclipse is coming. The sun will be entirely blocked by the moon, and the Firebenders will be helpless...

EARTH KING
What are you suggesting, Sokka?

SOKKA
That's the day we need to invade the Fire Nation -- the Day of Black Sun.

The King looks up at Sokka, his face heavy with burden. He shakes his head.

EARTH KING
I don't know... That would require moving troops out of Ba Sing Se. We'd be completely vulnerable.

SOKKA
You're already vulnerable. The Fire Nation won't stop until Ba Sing Se falls. You can either sit back and wait for that to happen -- or take the offensive and give yourself a fighting chance.

The Earth King looks into each of the kid's eyes as they wait for his answer. He nods.

EARTH KING
Very well. You have my support.

The kids cheer and have a mini-celebration. Aang does a little dance with Momo. Their rejoicing is interrupted by GENERAL HOW.

GENERAL HOW
Your Majesty, I apologize for the interruption.

EARTH KING
(to kids)
This is General How. He's the leader of the Council of Five -- my highest ranking generals.

GENERAL HOW
We searched Long Feng's office. I think we've found something that will interest everybody.

INT. LONG FENG'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

The royal guard has several crates of parchment open on Long Feng's desk. The Earth King examines them.

GENERAL HOW
There are secret files on everyone in Ba Sing Se. Including you kids.

AANG
Secret files?

EARTH KING
Toph Beifong...

Toph opens her file and takes out a letter. She hands it to Katara to read.

KATARA
It's a letter from your mom. Your mom's here in the city... and she wants to see you.

TOPH
Long Feng intercepted our letters from home?
(shaking her head)
That's just sad.

The King picks up another file.

EARTH KING
Aang...

He hands the file to Aang, who finds a letter within.

GENERAL HOW
This scroll was attached to the horn of your bison when the Dai Li captured him.

Aang reads the message, his eyes widen with wonder.

AANG
It's from the Eastern Air Temple.

The Earth King continues looking through the files.

KATARA
(hopeful)
Is there... a letter for me and Sokka by any chance?

Sokka looks hopeful too. The King shakes his head "no."

EARTH KING
I'm afraid not.

SOKKA
Oh...

Sokka and Katara look disappointed.

GENERAL HOW
But there is an intelligence report that might interest you.

He passes the report to Katara and she begins reading it.

KATARA
(stunned)
A small fleet of Water Tribe ships...

SOKKA
What?! That could be Dad!

KATARA
(reading)
Protecting the mouth of Chameleon Bay... Led by Hakoda! It <u>is</u> Dad!

She and Sokka are nearly weeping with joy.

INT. UNCLE AND ZUKO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Zuko is now trembling from his sickness, and only barely conscious. Uncle tries to feed him some tea, but Zuko coughs.

UNCLE
You should know this is not a natural sickness.

He tries to feed him more tea.

UNCLE (cont'd)
But that shouldn't stop you from enjoying tea.

ZUKO
(pained murmuring)
What's happening?

UNCLE
Your critical decision -- what you did beneath that lake... It was in such conflict with your image of yourself, that you are now at war within your own mind and body.

ZUKO
What's that mean?

Uncle continues to feed him more tea.

UNCLE
You are going through a metamorphosis, my nephew. It will not be a pleasant experience. But when you come out of it, you will be the beautiful prince you were always meant to be.

Zuko coughs again, this time spitting out the tea he was just fed. Uncle smiles and cleans off his chin.

INT. KIDS' APARTMENT - THAT MOMENT

Aang and friends are still reading over their letters with excitement.

AANG
I can't believe it. There's a man living at the Eastern Air Temple. He says he's a guru.

SOKKA
What's a guru? Some kind of poisonous blowfish?

AANG
No, a spiritual expert. He wants to help me take the next step in the Avatar journey. He says he can teach me to control the Avatar state!

KATARA
And I can't believe we know where our dad is now.

TOPH
I know what you mean. My mom's in the city.
(MORE)

TOPH (cont'd)
And from her letter it sounds like she finally understands me.

SOKKA
This is all such big news, where do we even start?

KATARA
I hate to say it, but... we have to split up.

AANG
Split up?! We just found Appa and got the family back together. Now you want us to separate?

KATARA
You have to meet this guru, Aang. If we're going to invade the Fire Nation, you need to be ready.

AANG
Well, if I'm going to the Eastern Air Temple, Appa and I could drop you off at Chameleon Bay to see your dad.

SOKKA
Someone has to stay here with the Earth King and help him plan for the invasion. I guess that's me.

KATARA
No, Sokka. I know how badly you want to help Dad. You go to Chameleon Bay. I'll stay here with the King.

SOKKA
(stammering)
You are the nicest sister ever...!

Sokka is so happy he throws his arms around his sister and gives her a surprising kiss on the cheek.

KATARA
Easy there, big brother. Though you're right, I am.

EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - LATER

The Earth King is on hand to see the kids off. Aang and Sokka are packing the last of their belongings onto Appa.

Toph and Katara stand nearby. Aang tries to have a private moment with Katara.

AANG
(somewhat sotto)
Katara, I need to tell you something. I've been wanting to say it for a long time...

KATARA
What is it, Aang?

He tries to put together the words to tell her how he feels. He nervously looks down as he musters his courage.

AANG
Katara, I...

Now he looks up, and he looks her directly in the eye. They both know what he's about to say. Then--

SOKKA
Alright! Who's ready to get going on a little men-only man trip?!

Sokka rushes Aang and pummels him with a series of playful punches to the gut. The moment interrupted, Aang smiles at Katara as he and Sokka prepare to leave. The Earth King approaches them.

EARTH KING
Aang and Sokka, I wish you a good journey. Ba Sing Se owes you its thanks, and we look forward to your safe return.

A ROYAL GUARD enters with an announcement.

ROYAL GUARD
Your Majesty -- there are three female warriors here to see you. They're from the Island of Kyoshi.

Sokka hears this just as he is trying to climb on Appa.

SOKKA
That's Suki!

He crashes to the ground, and gets up unphased.

EARTH KING
You know these warriors?

SOKKA
Oh yeah. The Kyoshi Warriors are a skilled group of fighters. Trustworthy too. They're good friends of ours.

EARTH KING
(to royal guard)
Then we shall welcome them as honored guests.

The royal guard bows and exits. Toph approaches, and all four of our heroes stand facing each other. They don't want to say goodbye.

KATARA
Wait, Aang.

She hugs him and kisses him dearly on the head. Then, after a moment, it turns into a four-way hug, with all of the kids saying big, epic goodbyes.

TOPH
I'm really going to miss you guys.

KATARA / AANG /
Me too. / Yeah.

The hug goes on a little too long, with Sokka being SMOOSHED in the middle.

SOKKA
Great. That's enough... Okay, we love each other... Seriously.

INT. ZUKO AND UNCLE'S APARTMENT - THAT MOMENT

Zuko finally wakes from his sleep. He sits up on the edge of his bed. His face is obscured by the dark shadows of the room. He gets up and trudges to the bathroom.

Zuko reaches for the pail of water. He splashes some of it on his face, then feels something odd on his scalp. He looks up into the mirror -- to his horror, his head is cleanly shaven with an Airbender tattoo right down the center!

ZUKO
(SCREAMS)

QUICK CUT TO:

INT. ZUKO AND UNCLE'S APARTMENT - THAT MOMENT

Zuko startles himself awake and bolts upright in bed, jarred from the nightmare he just had. In a panic, he feels his head -- his hair is still there, and so is his scar.

ZUKO
(SIGHS)

He lies back down.

EXT. SKY - APPA'S BACK - MORNING

Aang and Sokka are flying high above the Earth Kingdom, with Ba Sing Se in their rear view.

SOKKA
You see, Aang? A little positive thinking works wonders. We got the King on our side, we got Long Feng arrested, and when we get back... Suki's waiting for me.

Aang is all smiles, thinking about Katara.

AANG
Yeah... girls are waiting for us. Thanks, positive attitude.

SOKKA
(super positive)
Everything is going to work out perfectly, from now on and forever.

Aang smiles back at him.

INT. BA SING SE PRISON - THAT MOMENT

Long Feng is now sitting on the floor of a dingy little cell, looking rather pathetic. The security slot on his door suddenly opens, and a tray of food if pushed through.

GUARD'S VOICE
Dinner.

Long Feng looks at his meal, which is actually pretty exquisite for prison food.

GUARD'S VOICE (cont'd)
(sotto)
The Council of Five and the military are loyal to the Earth King. But the Dai Li remains loyal to you...
(bows)
Long Feng, Sir.

We see that the guards are the King's Dai Li bodyguards. They salute Long Feng, and walk away. Long Feng GRINS as he takes a bite of his fine meal.

EXT. FANCY MARBLE BUILDING - LATER

Toph walks up the steps to the door. She takes a deep breath, then knocks. The door is pushed open by her knock.

TOPH
Hello, Mom? Anyone home?

Toph waits for a beat. There's no answer, so she walks inside.

INT. EMPTY CONDOMINIUM - CONTINUOUS

There's nothing in the apartment at all. No people. No furniture.

Toph hears the echo of her voice in the empty apartment. Suddenly, something drops from the ceiling, and Toph is encased in a snug, metal coffin (similar to the one used on King Bumi in ep. 203). We hear the clatter of her struggling inside.

TOPH
Hey! Who do you think you're dealing with?!

Xin Fu and Master Yu appear in the doorway.

XIN FU
One loudmouthed, little brat who's strayed too far from home.

EXT. PALACE GROUNDS - SIMULTANEOUS

The Earth King has rolled out the V.I.P. treatment as the Kyoshi warriors approach the palace. The royal guards salute them as two servants unroll a fancy carpet in front of them. (We should only see the warriors from the back at this point.)

EARTH KING
In our hour of need, it is with the highest honor that I welcome our esteemed allies -- the Kyoshi Warriors.

Everyone APPLAUDS as the warriors approach the King's throne and bow deeply. For the first time, we see that this is not Suki and her warriors, but Azula, Mai, and Ty Lee dressed in Kyoshi robes and make-up.

AZULA
We are the Earth King's humble servants.

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW